

Along with Tuttle, another Calaveras County resident, Joseph "Topper" Huberty, of San Andreas, was on the mission. He later became a Calaveras County Superior Court judge.

The B-24s were equipped with extra fuel tanks in their bomb bays to increase capacity to 3,100 gallons.

Of the 178 planes that took off, only 88 would return—55 of which were damaged during the mission.

The formation crossed the Mediterranean and Adriatic seas and the Pindus Mountains in Albania before crossing into Romania, where they dropped to low altitude to avoid detection by German radar.

Mission commanders ordered complete radio silence for the duration of the flight. Despite these precautions, the Germans became aware of the approaching American planes. Due to an inability to communicate effectively, the formation of planes had become scattered and flew off course. Even though everything hadn't gone according to plan, the mission moved forward.

When nearing Ploiesti, a navigation error caused a group of planes to follow the wrong railroad tracks toward the objective. This caused the planes to fly through an extensive air defense system around Bucharest before they even reached the defenses protecting the oil refineries.

"It was supposed to be a surprise, but there was no doubt they were ready for us," Tuttle said.

The mission has been described as an "aerial Gettysburg." One pilot likened the raid to "driving down the main street of your hometown with everybody shooting at you."

"In order to be on target, we followed railroad lines for 35 miles on the way in," Tuttle said. "We were coming in on a straight line, which made us sitting ducks for the flak gunners."

"I was standing between pilot and copilot. The top turret gunman was above me with his knees on my shoulders. I could look out at the No. 3 engine through a little window. I saw the tracer bullets going by, some making an impact."

"We were as low as we could get without crashing."

With so much anti-aircraft fire directed at his plane, Tuttle said he didn't know if he was going to survive, but he was sure of one thing.

"This was it, this was what I joined the war for," Tuttle said. "I spent three years in the goddamned military to do some good."

"I was scared," he continued. "But that's what courage is—even when you're scared, you go on fighting."

"We had all 10 machine guns firing at once and the entire plane was vibrating," he said, adding the continuous fire was so intense the gun barrels were in danger of warping from the heat. "One formation went in with 13 planes and only six came out. They hit us hard. I had a 20 mm cannon shell lodge in my radio transmitter right by my toe. It came within about three inches of my foot."

After running the railroad gauntlet, Tuttle's B-24 reached the target refinery and he remembers seeing quite a few cables holding up towers in the area.

"We snapped the cables with our plane," he said. "Unfortunately, sometimes the cables snapped the plane. See, we lost a lot of planes. We dropped all the bombs right on it. That's why we went in low—so we could be accurate. Some of the bombs had delayed fuses so they went off maybe 20 or 30 seconds later."

After delivering the payload, Tuttle's plane peeled off and "got the hell out of there."

"We stayed down low. This made it much harder for fighter planes to hit us," Tuttle

said. "If they made a pass and missed, they'd hit the ground. We had a long way to go—over the Balkans, across the Mediterranean and back to Libya."

A tally of the flight log totaled about 16 hours in the air.

Looking back on the mission, Tuttle said it was unlike any other.

"It was the greatest air-to-ground combat in history," he said. "There's never been another one like it, because everything has changed."

While it may have been one-of-a-kind, the mission was very costly. During the mission, 310 airmen were killed and 108 were captured as prisoners of war.

Tuttle flew 19 other missions during his time in the service—well 18 and a half, because he was shot down on a mission to Wiener Neustadt, Austria, on Oct. 1, 1943.

"I dropped bombs on Germany all over the place," he said. "I never got injured, but one time a bullet passed so close to my big toe it raised a blood blister."

On the day he was shot down, the pilot had just dropped the plane's complement of bombs on a German fighter plane manufacturing plant.

"We dropped all the bombs, which was good because the bomb bay was clear when it came time for me to bail out," Tuttle said, adding the plane was at about 19,000 feet. "The co-pilot gave me the thumbs-up and I rolled out of the bomb bay. I was going to delay opening my chute, because it enhanced my chances of surviving the jump."

Tuttle said he watched his plane spiral downward until it crashed in a fireball into the Austrian countryside.

"Four guys went down with the plane," he said, shaking his head at how quickly his world changed from thinking he might die to having hope for survival after he jumped out of the plane.

"All of a sudden I'm over an Austrian meadow, two or three miles up, floating gently in the breeze looking around at the peaceful countryside, and I thought, 'Hell, I might survive this war.'"

Tuttle touched down in the middle of a thicket, rolled up his chute and concealed himself under bushes until enemy soldiers started yelling nearby. Concerned they might begin shooting into the thicket, Tuttle opted to surrender.

"I thought I better get out of there," he said. "I came out with my hands up and said, 'You got me.'"

Tuttle was taken to the infamous Stalag 17 camp and spent 19 months there as a prisoner of war.

"We were not treated well," he said. "I got down to 137 pounds from 175."

Tuttle remembers sleeping on burlap nailed to a wooden frame without sheets or pillows. He and his compatriots called the beds "fart sacks."

"We often ate what we called 'wet dog soup.' It smelled like a wet dog. It was a real favorite," he with a sarcastic laugh. "Sometimes we got a few turnips and potatoes. It was not good."

The occasional book that was sent into the camp and a secret radio smuggled to him by allied forces that kept him up to date on the war were small comforts to which Tuttle clung.

When the war ended, Tuttle was released from the camp and walked down a road in Austria. That's when he saw the first American soldiers he had seen in many months.

"They were throwing German guns into piles. I was so glad to see them," Tuttle said, his voice choked with emotion and tears welling in his eyes. "The war was over."

Tuttle was taken to a hospital in England to "get fattened up" and later returned to the U.S., where he had a long career serving

as a distinguished attorney and superior court judge.

Just a few years ago, Tuttle wrote down his experiences at Ploesti within the context of his autobiography, "Nevada City and Beyond, an Unscripted Life."

Tuttle plans to live out the remainder of his days in Mokelumne Hill with his wife Sally.

"During the war, I gained a better understanding of life, what it means and why some values are worth fighting for," Tuttle said. "Looking back, I'm proud of what I did. Damn proud."

HISPANIC-SERVING INSTITUTIONS WEEK

(Mr. GRIJALVA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GRIJALVA. Madam Speaker, during Hispanic Heritage Month, I would like to take the time to honor Hispanic-Serving Institutions across this country. These educational institutions—like in my home State where there are 10 of them—are institutions of higher learning, with enrollment of at least 25 percent of undergraduates being full-time Latino students.

At a time when the population of the Latino community continues to grow, it is essential that we invest in education and that we support institutions that promote that education and provide for these students the opportunity and the access for them to go on and be great contributing members to our country.

President Obama proclaimed the week of September 15–21 as Hispanic-Serving Institutions Week. It is with this sentiment in mind that I would like to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing the wonderful job these institutions do by supporting the Preservation Research at Institutions Serving Minorities Act. This act would effectively amend the National Historic Preservation Act to guarantee Hispanic-Serving Institutions get equal access to technical or financial assistance to promote professionalism and the preservation of our natural resources, historic buildings, and artifacts throughout this country. With that, let me again say thank you to the Hispanic-Serving Institutions.

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

(Mr. GARCIA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GARCIA. Madam Speaker, today I rise to honor Hispanic-Serving Institutions Week. We recognize the important roles these institutions play in educating our future leaders. With more than 60 percent Hispanic enrollment, Florida International University has made tremendous contributions to my district, among those my own father, who graduated from there. And Hispanic-Serving Institutions are not